

Pistorius advert gets most complaints ever in Britain

LONDON, UK: An advertisement making light of the trial of South African athlete Oscar Pistorius received by far the most complaints ever in Britain, the advertising watchdog said on Friday...



The watchdog banned the Pistorius advert on the grounds it "brought advertising into disrepute".
(Image: Chris Eason, via Wikimedia Commons)

The advert for Irish betting company Paddy Power appeared during Pistorius' trial for murder last year and read "money back if he walks" - a pun on the prospect of his release and the fact he is a double amputee.

The sprinter, 28, was jailed for five years by a Pretoria court in October after being convicted of culpable homicide for the killing of his girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp. Pistorius said he shot Steenkamp through a locked toilet door in the early hours of Valentines Day in 2013, believing she was an intruder.

The advertisement appeared in a British newspaper during the trial in March, promoting Paddy Power's betting offers on whether Pistorius would be found guilty or not. The advert said the company would refund all those who bet Pistorius would be convicted, were he to be found not guilty.

The advert received 5,525 complaints, by far the highest number of objections ever received for an advertisement in Britain according to the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). Those who complained accused Paddy Power of making light of a woman's death and of disability.

The watchdog banned the advert on the grounds it "brought advertising into disrepute". Paddy Power had argued that while irreverent, the advert was not intended to cause offence.

Two other advertisements received more complaints than ever before in 2014, something the ASA said reflected the public's increased use of social media to coordinate complaints. One was an advert for website Booking.com that was cleared of appearing to use the word "booking" as a substitute for a swearword. It received 1,768 complaints.

The other was an email from newspaper the Sun that offered certain subscribers the chance to win a date with a topless model - it received 1,711 objections. The ASA banned it and found the offer of a date as a reward was "demeaning to women and objectified those offered as prizes".

ASA chief executive Guy Parker said it was inevitable that some ads would split opinion.

"2014 was the year social media came into its own in making it easier than ever to lodge complaints en masse," he said.

Source: AFP, via I-Net Bridge

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